

CEREBUS JAKA'S STORY 2



115
OCT

NOTE • FROM • THE PRESIDENT

The notebook I write and draw Cerebus in (whatever notebook I am currently using is called **The notebook**; the Notebook I did, say, 41 through 49 in is called **A notebook**; there are twelve of them to date) I originally called the Albatross. The second one is inscribed Albatross Too. The third I think I inscribed Albatross Albatross Albatross and then gave up the practice largely because I didn't have a cute joke for the number 4. I started using and keeping a notebook with Cerebus 20; before that I used the backs of outdated COMICgraphics stationery (the name I used for my commercial art business), Aardvark-Vanaheim stationery. Old flyers for COMICgraphics. I even had the last of a **huge** pile of 8½ × 11 paper my grandfather gave me in 1973; the pile I thought I would never fill. The pile I thought about when Berni Wrightson told me (I was a very alert fan-boy, who wanted to be a pro, so I listened) that I had ten thousand bad drawings in me and after I had drawn them I would start doing good drawings. I think it was Ronn (Visual Treat) Sutton who told me about the pads and pads of paper (cheap newsprint as I recall) that Wrightson had filled with quick figure sketches, studies of hands, faces. If you want to learn how to draw, buy a six foot stack of 8½ × 11 paper and draw on every sheet. Hey, I didn't believe Berni either, but he was right.

At the Toronto Summit I found it very funny the use we got out of the pads of paper and pens they gave us with the meeting room: John Totleben was the most compulsive doodler of all of us, so he had knocked out a nice 8½ × 11 portrait of a beautiful girl by the time we had finished our coffees after lunch. I kept a Michael Zulli sketch he did (during the second day's afternoon session in the Waterview Suite) of a cartoon puma lying atop an obelisk thinking "Puma Bloos?" while in the lower left is a maniacal Cerebus drawing thinking "I'm not bad; I'm just drawn that way." From the same session, I have a drawing Pete Laird did that I watched him draw (albeit upside-down), while he and I discussed the issue of creators submitting their work to a publisher vs. creators sending their work straight to a printer. It was a drawing of a box camera sort of affair with a kind of segmented hose trailing out the bottom of it, surrounded by bubbles which indicate it is under-water.

Sergio Aragones told me that he does his most prolific writing on long plane flights, which is one of the reasons he takes a lot of long plane flights. I find that amazing. The only time I ever tried writing on a plane (not the Note from the President in 114; **writing!**) was the Cerebus/X-Men cross-over which Chris Claremont and I plotted on an early-morning flight from Toronto to Vancouver.

In the interest of variety, unlike the two previous Notes from the President in 112/113 and 114, I have chosen not to begin with the assertion that I really wish these lines would just fill up by themselves so that I could instead be working on the issue at hand (for which Gerhard has just finished page three and the top half of pages four and five). Instead, this time out, I'm leaving it for the end.

It's been nice talking with you, but now it's time to get Cerebus an ale.

The Writer was so wrung out from writing all the thumping great chunks of text in the last issue, that he simply couldn't bear putting two more words together when it came time to write the above; so he left it for the Artist to do. Now you know why we only let him draw.

Anyway, I hope everyone likes the new Notebooks section starting next issue. I'm going to try to keep the section as current as possible (like, the previous issue if I can manage it).

Now I have to fill up the rest of this issue's letters page, write the Notebooks section, write the reprint page headings for the first four **Cerebus bi-weekly's**, correct the interior type for this issue, finish writing the interior text pages for this issue, then write the Note from the President for 116 and then write 116.

Back in a while.

CEREBUS

NO. 115

OCTOBER 1988

DAVE SIM
President

GERHARD
Background, cover-colour
and tones

KAREN McKIEL
Administrator

Circulation
26,000

JAKA'S STORY
a novel

PROLOGUE
(Cerebus 114)

POGROM'S PROGRESS
(Cerebus 115 to
Cerebus 119)

THE POET
(Cerebus 120 to
Cerebus 130)

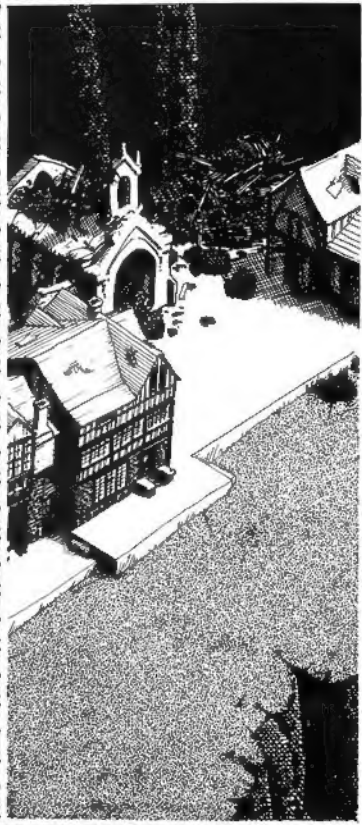
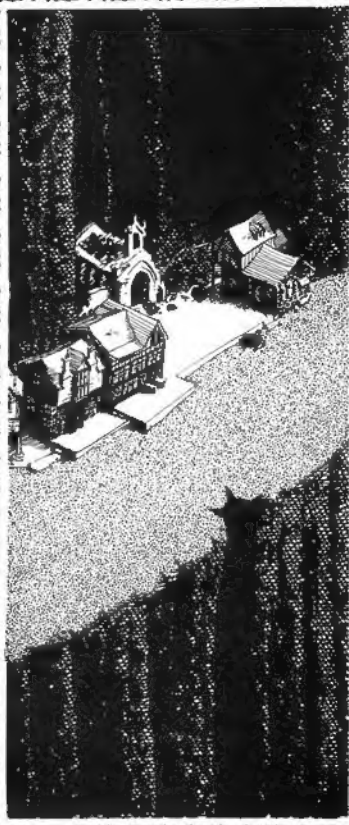
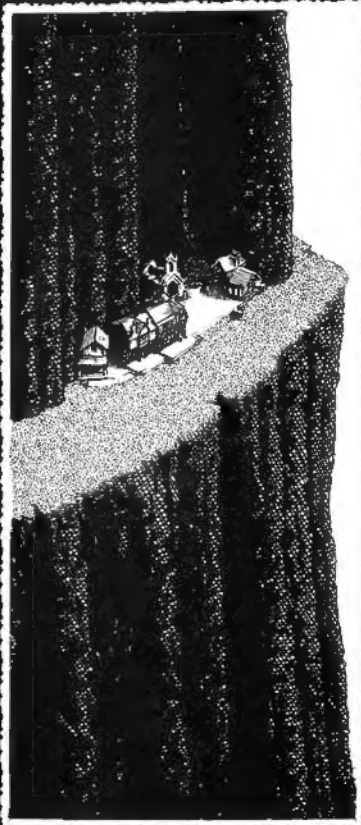
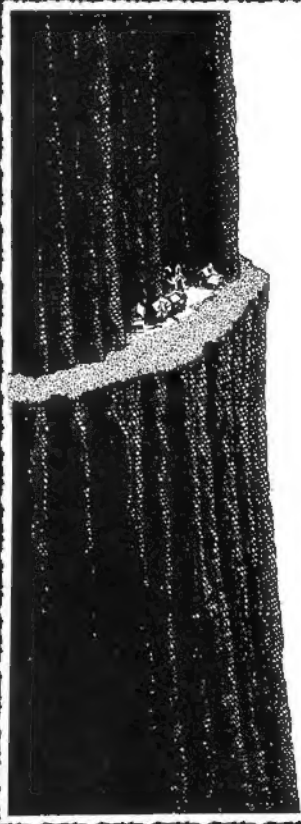
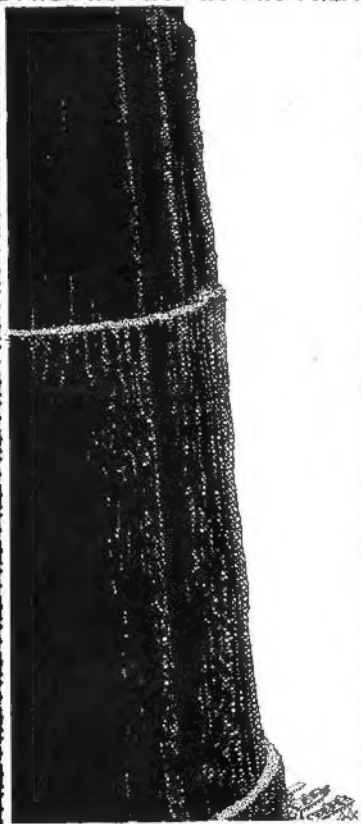
**MYSTERY
ACHIEVEMENT**
(Cerebus 131 to
Cerebus 136)

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JAKA'S STORY

book one
POGROM'S
PROGRESS





Morning Missus.

Morning, Mr. Withers. It's a beautiful day isn't it?

It is indeed, Missus. It is, indeed. A beautiful day.

And you, Mr. Withers? How are you, today?

Fine and fit, Missus. Fit and fine.

As I can plainly see. You're a fine and fit specimen, Mr. Withers.

Thank you, Missus. I do my best.

You do, indeed, Mr. Withers. You do, indeed.

I've a surprise or two, as well, Missus... In addition to the flour and the margarine and the cabbage bits and the potatoes.

Have you, indeed, Mr. Withers?

Indeed, I do, Missus. Indeed, I do. I have apples, Missus. Apples.

Apples, Mr. Withers. I am surprised. I really don't know how you do it. Apples. Amidst all these shortages and all. Oh, they're lovely, Mr. Withers.

My other surprise is a little jar of that honey you like so much. The one with a little comb left in it by the bees. Just for you.

Apples and honey. Two wonderful surprises, Mr. Withers. I don't know what I would do without you. I really just don't know.

I try to do my best, Missus. That's what a grocer is for. I just do my best.

You do indeed, Mr. Withers. You do, indeed. I'll take a bit of each, then, for my husband and myself.

And would you like me to wrap those for you, Missus?

Oh, goodness, no. My little basket will do just fine. I'm only going a few steps.

Very well, Missus. That will be three copper bits even.

There you are, Mr. Withers. Three copper bits.

So, I'll see you tomorrow then?

You will, indeed, Mr. Withers. You will indeed.

Thank you, Missus.

Thank you, Mr. Withers. I don't know what I would do without you.

You have a lovely day now, Missus.

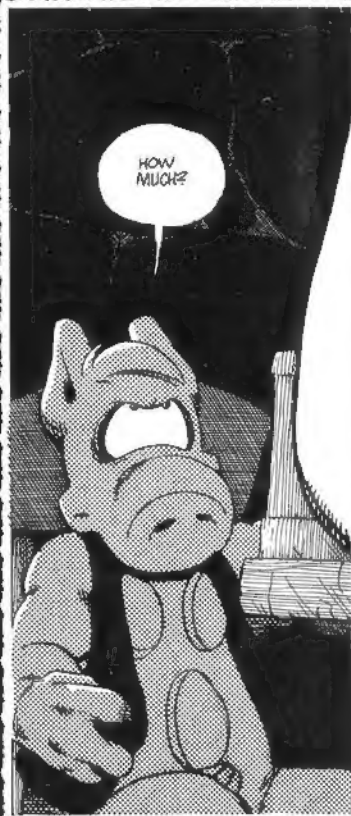
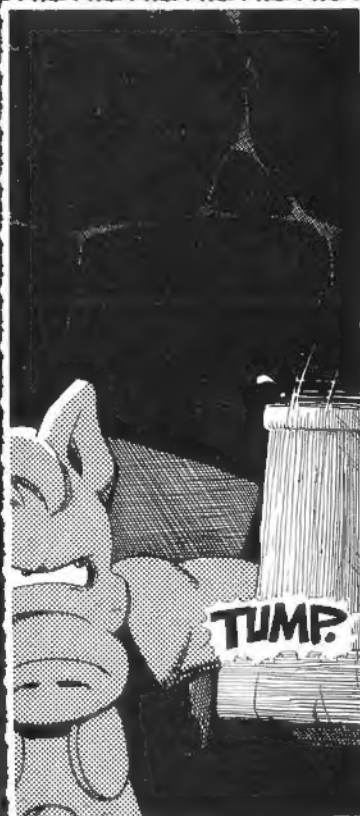
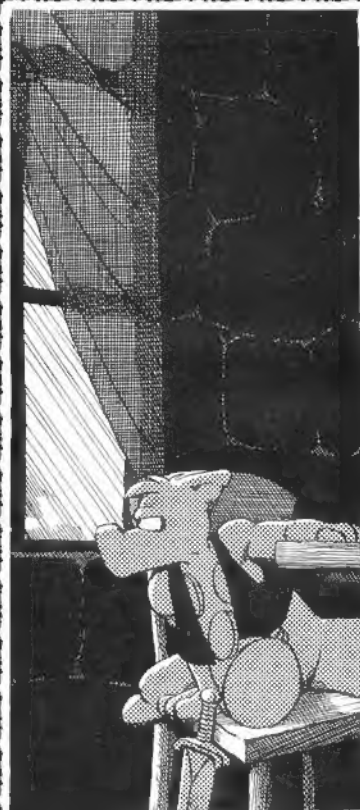
You too, Mr. Withers. You too.

Goodbye.

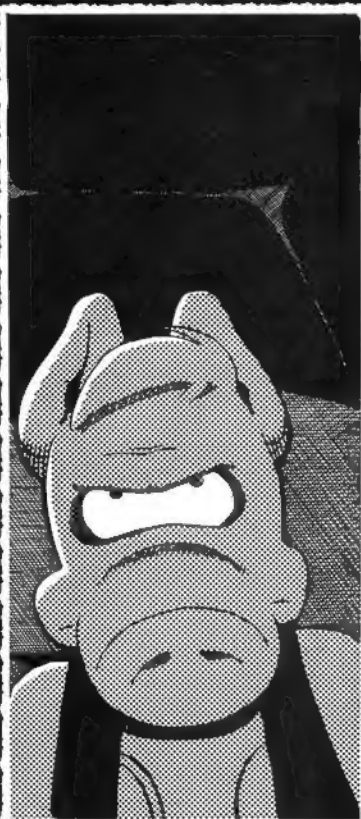
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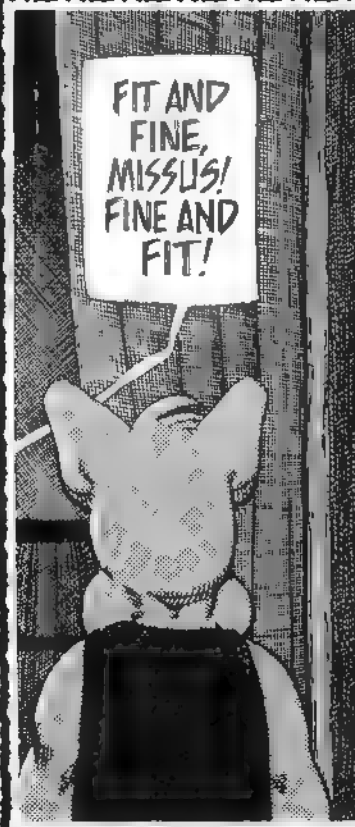
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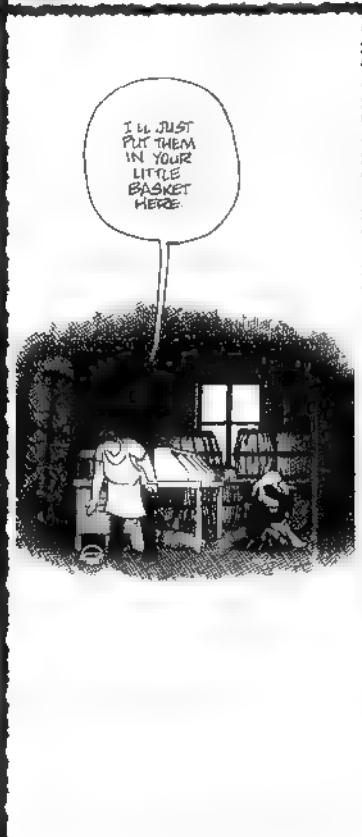












W

HEN IT CAME TIME, that first morning, for the long and wearying walk to the playground, Nurse paused, having noticed that Jaka was not carrying Missy. She remarked on the fact, Jaka's only response being an eloquent shrug. Nurse (whose very life had been something of a long and eloquent shrug) nodded her understanding, obviating the need for further discussion.

When they had arrived at the playground, however, and Jaka had adopted a solemn demeanor in preparing for the day's Pageant Game, Missy's absence was most keenly felt.

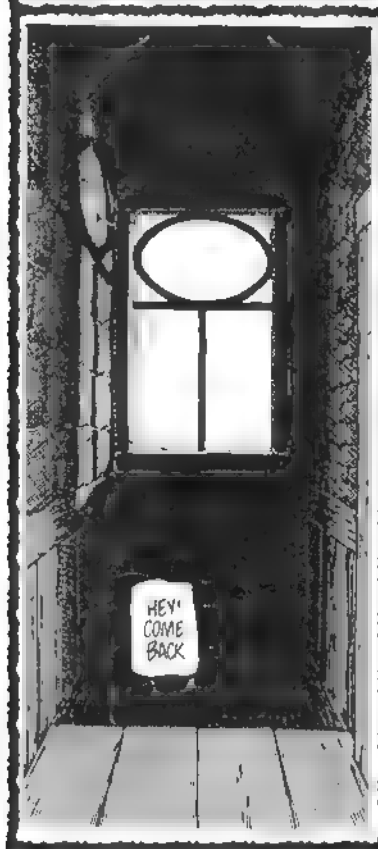
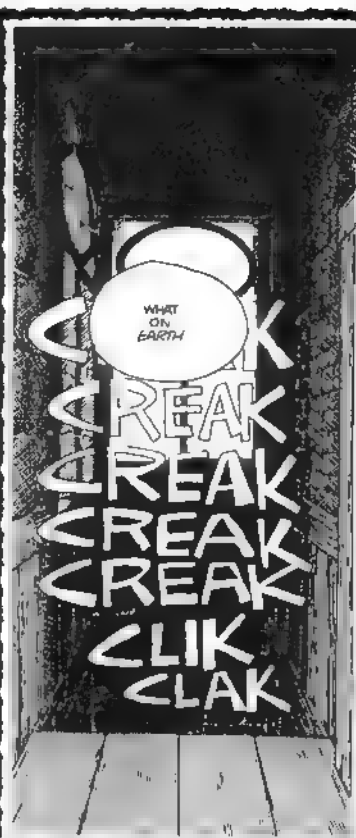
Though Jaka urged Magic forward with progressively harder kicks; though she listened for the first inklings of a roaring, reverberating welcome; though she eagerly awaited the lighting of the burlap alchemist bags filled with powders which burned with coloured flame. Though she waited more patiently than one would expect of any five-year-old; nothing happened.

The rustling of the countless surrounding leaves remained just so; unwilling to swell to a cacophonous greeting befitting a national heroine. The sun-light flickering across the hard-packed playground remained just so; resisting any tendency to coalesce into rainbow tongues of ceremonial torch-light. And noble Magic, loyal Magic, was dispirited to the point of immobility, strangely and disturbingly placid. Though Jaka rocked to and fro, there could be no denying that the effort was hers alone; not only was Magic unhelpful to her in her labours, he clung, perversely, to the physical laws governing inertia.

She grew weary of her exertions shortly and, soon, all was still.









THEN, STRANGELY, without knowing why or how, Jaka found herself standing in front of Magic. She had no memory (clear or otherwise) of leaving the horse's back, only the curious certainty that she had been standing motionless for many minutes. That curious certainty; and a pleasant feeling of inner calm; enfolded her from without, and seemed to illuminate her from within.

At the exact moment of awareness return, the early afternoon breeze, in the act of lifting stray wisps of hair across the field of her vision, lost a measure of its strength, receded, withdrew.

Even her eyes (and their delicate folds of pink lid) grew still and were at rest. The patch of ground she stared at seemed now fixed in the firmament of her being, as much a part of her as the very trees and their multi-hued leaves; leaves alive, dying, and dead.

Slowly, dreamily, the fingers of her left hand began to displace the air surrounding them, pressing what was against that which was not.

Simultaneously her right hand swayed forward, slightly, fractionally, from her wrist followed, slowly, fractionally, by her index finger.

And she stood, just so, for quite a very long time; in that attitude of inner reflection which mortals pity and the Gods revere.

Not even the keenest of observers would have noticed the slight stretching and contraction of the splayed fingers of her left hand, nor the infinitesimal circles traced in the air by the solitary digit of her right.

Her awareness drifted, carried from her.

The stillness seemed to swell.





AFTER THE
WOMEN SOLDIERS
GOT HERE, IT WAS
MADNESS, COMPLETE
MADNESS.

MEN GETTING
THEIR HANDS CUT
OFF, THEIR TONGUES
CUT OUT.



RIGHT
THERE
IN THE
STREET.

THAT WAS WHEN WE
DECIDED TO RISK THE
MOUNTAIN QUAKES
AND MOVE UP HERE.
THEN...



WE MET
MR
WITHERS.

WE
NEEDED
A PLACE
TO LIVE

AND HE NEEDED
TENANTS AND
A DANCER FOR
HIS PUB

SO IT COULDN'T
HAVE WORKED
OUT BETTER



WE'RE
LUCKY
THAT
WAY

WHenever
we really
need something,
we get it

JUST
LIKE
THAT



OF COURSE, HE
HASN'T HAD
MUCH BUSINESS
YET

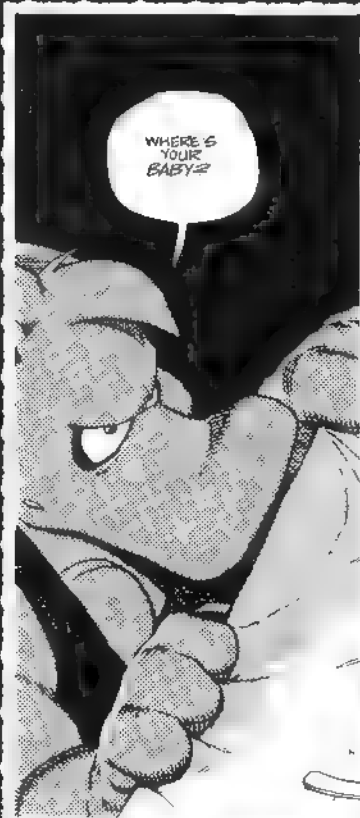
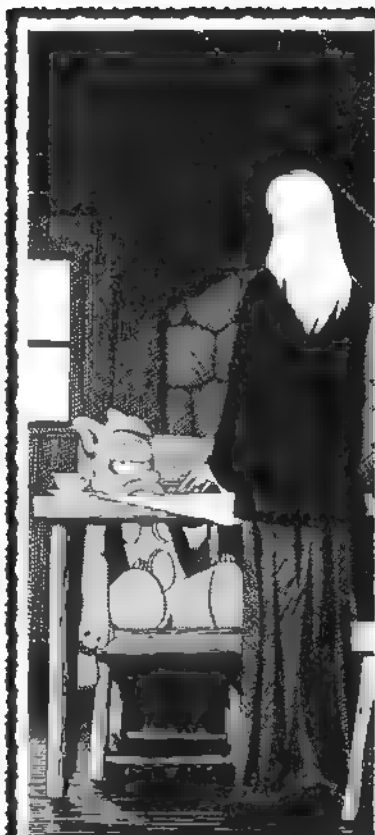
MR WITHERS
I MEAN.



BUT THAT'S BEEN
THE SAME WAY
ANYWHERE I'VE
WORKED

NO BUSINESS
AT FIRST,
AND THEN
'BANG!'

..ALL
OF A
SUDDEN



Morning, Missus

Morning, Mr. Withers. I'm afraid I owe
you a very big apology.

Why, whatever for, Missus?

For walking out of here yesterday morning
without thanking you properly for those
lovely apples you had for me. It was very

impolite

rude

thoughtless of me

Not at all, Missus. Not at all. Think nothing
of it

It's a beautiful day isn't it, Mr. Withers?

It is indeed, Missus. It is, indeed. A beauti-
ful day

And you, Mr. Withers? How are you to-
day?

Fine and fit, Missus. Fit and fine

As I can plainly see. You're a fine and



AARDVARK COMMENT

P.O. BOX 1674, STATION 'C', KITCHENER, ONTARIO N2G 4R2

Dear Dave,

Issue 111 just wended its way to my doorstep and I must admit I'm impressed. You managed to draw a fairly rich picture of the fundamental dichotomy without using good/evil or heavy partisan overtones and I've never seen a better handling of the male/female aspect

My angle on gender comes from work on baboon social behavior. Young males play rough and tumble while young females play in a quieter "social economy" or give-and-take style. Inject a young female with testosterone and she becomes a rough and tumble tomboy. Adults usually follow the standard harem pattern: the dominant male impregnates most females and if a male low on the pecking order goes after a female in heat, he gets beat up. If a rogue male manages to beat the chief, he kills most of the young and pregnant females spontaneously abort. Blueprint of a male dominated society.

Evolutionarily, males are an innovation and females are the originals. Just as humans reach maturity more slowly than apes, males reach maturity more slowly than females. I don't think this makes males a "higher" form of life, though. The way I see it, females are the real humans and males are a combination of seed dispenser and the shock troops women throw against the world in general. Naturally, the race is best off taking seed from the most fit dispenser and if the environment isn't harsh enough to weed out the chaff, the males will have to fight it out among themselves. Females maintain the basic social structure of the species. Like the too smart computers in sci fi/horror stories, males have tried to take control of the entire social structure from time to time but in a healthy society, females decide which males are acceptable and which are not. Even in modern times when monogamy forces females to compete and be selected as well as males, the old tendencies are felt. Women have a better natural sense of what's happening in the interactions between members of a community and men are more comfortable dealing with the vast and threatening unknown. To

read into Cerebus, Terim consists of all that is and Tarim consists of all that is not.

For me, this adds a profound new dimension to the story so far. Of course, it does wear pretty thin in places. I can think of a number of Buddhist scholars who would be spinning in their graves if, after centuries of wrestling with the concept of emptiness and the nature of the void, they heard it say, "Nice girls don't explode." Even so, it beats the hell out of the gratuitous angst and divine intervention in the Marvel/DC twilight zone.

Finally, on rape. If women of old held society together and were the arbiters of male fitness, a rapist was a rogue seed dispenser bent on the destruction of humanity. When men invaded and raped the women of another tribe or race, it was a denial of the victims' humanity and was usually followed by murder. When a man raped a member of his own social group, he became the enemy of the whole group, men and women alike. So when Cerebus raped Astoria, he committed a crime against not just her, but all humanity and Terim in general. On the other hand, Astoria did try to use whatever situation was current to force Cerebus to take certain actions. She tried to smother him with all that is to deny him the freedom to choose change (what-is-not). Did Tarim rape Terim? I don't think so. He seemed naturally drawn to her and the act was one of creation. Rape would have been an irresponsible denial of Terim's right to exist as she chose and assertion of his right to do as he pleased with her, e.g. I don't feel like having gravity on Saturn today and let's let Sol and Barnard's Star be three light-days apart. This is not consistent with Tarim's sulking and remorse. The judge himself seems completely wrapped up in what-is (Terim) and unaware of the possibility of change (what-is-not) so his judgement is suspect. His doom predictions for Cerebus have more of Terim's wrath than true prophecy.

By the way, your fly is open

A.C. Bragenbendan
Green Bay, WI.

Were you looking for something down there?

Dear Dave,

I'd never even walked into a comic book store (much less read a Marvel comic) until a friend introduced me to Cerebus. I read his collection of 77 + and got hooked. As for the people who don't know what's going on, maybe they should try reading a few books without pictures, eh?

Kate Allen
Salina, KS.

Sounds good to me.

Dear Mr. Sim,

Upon completing *The Final Ascension*, I couldn't help but recall a small treatise written many years ago by an Irishman by the name of Jonathon Swift. The name of the piece is *A DISCOURSE CONCERNING THE MECHANICAL OPERATION OF THE SPIRIT IN A LETTER TO A FRIEND*. In it, Swift does no less than equate the fires of religious zeal with ejaculation:

"persons of a visionary devotion, either man or women; are in their complexion, of all others, the most amorous: for zeal is frequently kindled from the same spark with other fires, and from brotherly love, will proceed to raise that of a gallant. If we inspect into the usual process of modern courtship, we shall find it to consist in a devout turn of the eyes, called ogling, an artificial form of canting and whining by rote, every interval, for want of other matter, made up with a shrug or a hum, a sigh, or a groan: the style compact of insignificant words, incoherences and repetition. These I take to be the most accomplished rules of address to a mistress; and where are these performed with more dexterity than by the saints? Nay, to bring this argument yet closer, I have been informed by a certain sanguine brethern of the first class, that in the height and orgasmus of their spiritual exercise it has been frequent with them *****

immediately after which, they found the Spirit to relax and flag of a sudden with the nerves, and they were forced to hasten to a conclusion. This may be farther strengthened by observing, with wonder, how unaccountably all females are attracted by visionary of Enthusiastic preachers, though never so contemptible in their outward mien; which is usually supposed to be done upon considerations purely spiritual, without any carnal regards at all. But I have reason to think the sex hath certain characteristics by which they form a truer judgement of human abilities and performances than

we ourselves can possibly do of each other. Let that be as it will, thus much is certain, that however spiritual intrigues begin, they generally conclude like all others, they may branch upwards toward heaven, but the root is in the earth. Too intense a contemplation is not the business of flesh and blood; it must be the necessary course of things, in a little time, let go its hole, and fall into matter. Lovers, for the sake of celestial converse, are but another sort of platonics, who pretend to see stars and heavens in ladies's eyes, and to look or think no lower; but the same pit is provided for both; and they seem a perfect moral to the story of that philosopher who, while his thoughts and eyes were fixed upon the constellations, found himself seduced by his lower parts into a ditch".

Sounds a lot like Cerebus to me. In some strange way, it's one of my favorite passages (Cerebus is one of my favorite comics). Just thought I'd pass it on.

Yours,

Elena Steier

We are indeed fortunate that the Moral Majority is sub-literate or the works of Mr. Swift would not be long for this world.

Dear Dave,

The Second College Edition of *The American Heritage Dictionary* defines "classic" as "of the highest rank or class," "serving as an outstanding representative of its kind," and "having lasting significance or recognized worth." As I read each monthly installment of the *Cerebus* saga I find myself personally leaning toward the third definition. As a doctoral candidate in the field of history I have read my fair share of classic literature, and I have learned that it is impossible to understand a people, race, or civilization without experiencing their culture, whether this be by means of their music, drama, visual arts, or written word. The ancient Greeks are incomprehensible as a race if you have never read the works of their playwrights. Further, if you have read only the rather conservative and mainstream works of Aeschylus your view of Greek society will be stilted. Unless you have also read the ribald and irreverent plays of Aristophanes, your comprehension of Greek culture will be incomplete and erroneous.

I think *Cerebus* is a classic. And you, Dave, are to our society what Aristophanes was to the Greeks: a revealer of truths in a plain brown wrapper.

Cerebus is not just an outstanding representative of the comic book or of a larger graphic arts medium. It is more. *Cerebus* is literature. Many people

neglect comics in general. They need to stop looking at the medium. That is not what is important. In fact it seems to immediately prejudice many literate people. They forget that literature is not bounded by words alone. The histories of writing, bookmaking and printing have all included a graphic element from the beginning. The walls of ancient Egyptian tombs contain pictorial representations of the pharaohs, as well as an accompanying text of their exploits. Medieval monks embellished their laboriously copied manuscripts with drawings of animals, flowers and mythical beasts in order to enrich them. Woodcut engravings were included in the earliest printed books because it was recognized that many, indeed most, people could not read and a way was needed to convey ideas, concepts and emotions non-verbally. The comic art medium takes this age-old tradition a step further by melding words and pictures together. The result has an impact which transcends what either the verbal or non-verbal elements could do alone. Thus the comic strip and comic book are something new and unique in the literary world, even though they have antecedents far in our past.

The comic may be a relatively new literary form, but despite its novelty it is already said to have its own classics: the works of Windsor McCay, Harold Gray, Milton Caniff and Will Eisner, just to name a few. Their works are classic because they have withstood the test of time. There is something in them which is universal to the human experience, something which has relevance regardless of time. The above-mentioned masters all have a particular skill; they allow their audience to share in vivid emotions: dreamlike whimsy from *Little Nemo*, optimism in the face of adversity from *Little Orphan Annie*, courage and self-sacrifice in the heroes of Caniff and Eisner. The work of these men is so powerful and filled with passion that it still influences writers and artists today. Their works are timely and relevant although created long ago. And fortunately, a greater proportion of our population are discovering their work every day.

Many would say it is too early to judge present day classics. This may be true, but I dare say the world of 2088 will have a greater appreciation for Frank Miller, Alan Moore and Dave Sim than for Erica Jong, Harold Robbins or James Michener, even though the latter are more popular today. The difference will be in which works will stand the test of time.

There is a reason why people follow your story each month, Dave, and why they reread earlier parts of your work in packages such as *High Society* and

Church and State. It is more than the appealing artwork, the humorous approach to storytelling or the subtly intricate plot. *Cerebus's* experiences are identifiable ones. It does not matter that he is not a human being. *Cerebus* is interacting in a largely human environment. Your story, although it takes place in a mythical world, or at least a mythical past, reveals basic truths about Western society. Read a hundred years from now *Cerebus* will still be seen as dealing with fundamental questions about man's relationship to his world. Even if you were to end the story tomorrow, Dave, what you have so far produced explores enough of the human experience to rate as a classic. I believe the same can be said of Miller and Moore.

But you, Dave, will be unique, at least from a historian's point of view. Over the years you have left a tremendous body of personal papers behind. All the introductory essays in the *Swords of Cerebus* volumes, the interviews in fan and industry publications, the Note from the President columns, and the comments in the letters pages will provide others of my ilk, as well as literary critics, with much information about your life, loves, hates, hopes and dreams. Fifty years from now few people will care about your current spat with some distributors. Few will really care whether you were a bastard or saint in your personal life. You will be judged on the merits of your creation. All they will care about is your story. That is the case with writers of the past. Dickens, Hemingway and Steinbeck are read today not because they were either nice guys or shutheads but because their stories are still worthwhile.

I do not read *Cerebus* because I hope to retire in 29 years after selling my collection to a world which has finally woken up to your literary value. I read your work because I enjoy it. I genuinely want to see what *Cerebus* discovers about life and about the world he lives in. And beyond your work I enjoy reading about the experiences of Dave Sim: the artist and his development, the fighter for creator's rights, the seeker of respect for art and those who produce it. You see, Dave, following *Cerebus* from Day 1 has always given me two stories to follow; *Cerebus's* and yours. So far I have not determined which is the most interesting.

Thanks for the experience.

Your friend,

Bob Mueller
6788 Abrego Rd., #10
Goleta, CA, 93117

'A revealer of truths in a plain brown wrapper.' I really ought to get some new clothes, oughtn't I?

DAVE SIM CEREBUS

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A man with short brown hair, wearing dark sunglasses and a light blue short-sleeved button-down shirt, stands in a shallow, muddy stream. He is holding a light-colored wooden cutting board with both hands. On the board sits a black frying pan containing a whole, silvery fish. Next to the pan on the board are two knives with dark handles. The background is a muddy, brownish stream with some rocks visible.

It's the amazing SPUNK-O-MATIC™
AARDVARK FRYING LURE.™

Invented by Gerhard, it draws the fish
to it, hoists it by electromagnetic
impulse to Full Fry Position;
then cooks it up crisp and tasty.
The detachable knives come
with velcro handles which
stick to most any cloth sur-
face or companion. Ideal.

THE AMAZING SPUNK-O-MATIC™ AARDVARK FRYING LURE™

"you never thought fishing could be this easy"

photo by Eric Skovsgaard

